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## **State's Early Education Alignment/Focus Commended**

U.S. Department of Education Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Early Learning Jacqueline Jones praised North Carolina for its forward-thinking leadership in PreK-third grade education yesterday during her presentation to the Board.

In her remarks to the Board, Jones said that North Carolina's PreK programs have served as models for the rest of the country. "North Carolina and the Department of Public Instruction should be praised for restructuring to address the educational needs of our earliest learners. This direction closely aligns North Carolina with the priorities of the President and the U.S. Department of Education," Jones said.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson announced during her introduction of Jones that she is reorganizing existing staff in the early education sections of the Department to create the Office of Early Learning. "North Carolina must do better to support children's academic success in the early grades. This realignment will help us re-energize our focus on these grades and give children the support they need to succeed from the start," Atkinson said.

Jones' remarks focused on the need to align curricula, standards and assessments across the PreK-grade 3 continuum to leverage the gains being made for children in PreK programs.

The NCDPI is partnering with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to implement FirstSchool in demonstration sites across the state. FirstSchool is a PreK-Grade 3 initiative to promote public school efforts to become more responsive to the needs of an increasingly younger, more diverse population. FirstSchool unites the best of early childhood, elementary and special education.

The NCDPI also continues to build on its partnership with North Carolina's Smart Start initiative, which has been promoting the concept of "Ready Schools" and funding projects in several local communities with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

For more information, please contact the NCDPI's Communications division at 919.807.3450.

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